

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1416

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0262

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA

SUBJ: PLAYING WITH FIRE

1. QUEBEC MINISTER OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND LEADING PQ REFERENDUM STRATEGIST CLAUDE MORIN HAS VEHEMENTLY DENIED A REPORT WHICH APPEARED IN LE DEVOIR JULY 22 PURPORTING THAT GOQ STRATEGISTS ARE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING CALLING AN ELECTION WHICH WOULD TAKE THE FORM OF A REFERENDUM SHOULD THE UPCOMING REFERENDUM ON SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION BE DEFEATED. MORIN CONTENDED THAT, AS MEMBER OF ALL THE GOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEES STUDYING THE REFERENDUM QUESTION, HE WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE HEARD OF SUCH AN IDEA HAD IT BEEN DISCUSSED. MORIN SAID HE IS "VERY OPTIMISTIC" ABOUT THE CHANCES OF "OBTAINING THE AGREEMENT OF THE QUEBECOIS" WHEN THE REFERENDUM QUESTION IS POSED. THEREFORE, THE IDEA OF AN "INEVITABLE DEFEAT IS UNACCEPTABLE."

2. MORIN'S DENIAL WAS DIRECTED AT ARTICLE WRITTEN BY LE DEVOIR'S WELL-INFORMED POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT RESIDENT IN QUEBEC CITY, BERNARD DESCOTEAUX. ARTICLE ALLEGED THAT PQ LEADERS HAVE BEEN FORCED TO DEVELOP A NEW STRATEGY IN THE FACE OF RISING EVIDENCE THAT REFERENDUM DEFEAT IS PROBABLE. PQ PRIVATE POLLS, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT A MAJORITY OF FRANCOPHONE VOTES

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IN A REFERENDUM IS WITHIN THEIR GRASP. (THE MOST RECENT RADIO CANADA POLLS INDICATED 46 PERCENT OF FRANCOPHONES WOULD BE WILLING TO SUPPORT SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION IN A REFERENDUM.) THUS, A NEW STRATEGY ALLEGEDLY IS BEING CONSIDERED WHICH WOULD BE AIMED NOT AT WINNING THE REFERENDUM BUT AT WINNING A "MORAL VICTORY" BY GAINING A MAJORITY OF FRANCOPHONE VOTES. PQ WOULD THEN BLAME DEFEAT ON ANGLOPHONE MINORITY, AND RESULTS OF REFERENDUM WOULD

BE DISMISSED AS UNDEMOCRATIC AND AS A DEMONSTRATION THAT THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY IS BEING BLOCKED BY A PREJUDICED MINORITY. A GENERAL ELECTION WOULD THEN BE CALLED ASKING THE ELECTORATE FOR A MANDATE TO PROCEED WITH MOVES TOWARD SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION.

3. COMMENT: DESPITE MORIN'S DENIAL, SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE EXISTS INDICATING THAT ELEMENTS WITHIN THE PQ, POSSIBLY INCLUDING LEVESQUE HIMSELF, HAVE BEEN TEMPTED TO USE THE ANGLOS AS SCAPEGOATS IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE THEIR ONCE-ELECTORALLY PROFITABLE REFERENDUM PLOY HAS LANDED THEM IN. USUALLY WELL-INFORMED POLITICAL COMMENTATOR FOR LE SOLEIL, GILLES LESAGE, GAVE A STRONG HINT IN HIS JULY 26 COLUMN THAT LEVESQUE WAS THE SOURCE OF LE DEVOIR ARTICLE. HE SUGGESTS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER MAY HAVE BEEN FLOATING A TRIAL BALLOON, PERHAPS WITHOUT MORIN'S KNOWLEDGE. LEVESQUE HIMSELF, SPEAKING SHORTLY AFTER THE RECENT LIBERAL VICTORY IN NOTRE DAME DE GRACE, LENT CREDIBILITY TO THIS THESIS BY RAISING THE SPECTER OF THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF AN ANGLO-FRANCOPHONE SPLIT ON THE REFERENDUM (QUEBEC 0247). PQ PARLIAMENTARY LEADER CLAUDE CHARRON MADE SIMILAR REMARKS TO ME PRIVATELY(QUEBEC 220). FURTHER STRAW IN THE WIND IS RECENT LETTER TO THE EDITORS OF LE DEVOIR WRITTEN BY RABID NATIONALIST PIERRE BOURGAULT, WHO STILL ENJOYS CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE AMONG PQ MILITANTS. BOURGAULT DEFENDED LEVESQUE'S WARNING OF A POSSIBLE "MENACE TO SOCIAL PEACE" SHOULD ANGLOPHONE BLOC VOTE PREVENT PASSAGE OF REFERENDUM. BOURGAULT DENOUNCED ANGLO BLOC VOTING AS "UNDEMOCRATIC" AND CONFIDENTIAL

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WARNED THAT FRANCOPHONES "WILL NOT SUBMIT TO IT IN GOOD GRACE."

4. MORIN, OF COURSE, COULD NOT ADMIT TO A NO-WIN STRATEGY; MOREOVER, HE MAY WELL CONTINUE TO FAVOR HIS ORIGINAL REFERENDUM STRATEGY. HOWEVER, A SIMPLE ARITHMETIC ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATES THE DILEMMA THAT THE PQ NOW FACES. ON ONE SIDE, ANY REFERENDUM THAT POSES A MEANINGFUL QUESTION WILL BE OPPOSED BY A SOLD BLOC OF ANGLOPHONES, WHO MAKE UP 20 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. THESE WILL BE REINFORCED BY THE FRANCOPHONE FEDERALISTS, WHICH MAKE UP ABOUT ANOTHER 20 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. ON THE OTHER SIDE, THERE IS ONLY 15 TO 20 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION WHO ARE DEDICATED INDEPENDENTISTS AND WHO WILL VOTE FOR A SOVEREIGNTIST RESOLUTION IN ANY FORM. IN THE MIDDLE, THERE IS AN AMORPHOUS 40 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION WHOSE SUPPORT FOR SOVEREIGNTY IS GREATLY DEPENDENT ON THEIR PERCEPTION OF ITS COST (QUEBEC 105). THEY RANGE FROM LUKEWARM INDEPENDENTISTS TO BORDERLINE FEDERALISTS. FOR THE PQ TO GAIN A SIMPLE MAJORITY IN THE REFERENDUM, IT MUST PULL 3 OUT OF 4 OF THESE SKITTISH VOTERS TO ITS SIDE. FACED WITH THIS FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE, PQ STRATEGISTS HAVE OBVIOUSLY COME TO A GLOOMY CONCLUSION. NONETHELESS, ONE HOPES THEY WILL NOT SUCCUMB TO THE TEMPTATION TO MANIPULATE THE DANGEROUSLY VOLATILE LINGUISTIC

QUESTION IN A DESPERATE EFFORT TO RETAIN POWER AND ATTAIN  
SOVEREIGNTIST GOALS.  
MCNAMARA

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## Message Attributes

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